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ABSTRACT

With the cooperation of the Alaska state-operated schools and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), a study of language capabilities of entering primary students was accomplished. Some 175 rural schools were contacted, and replies were received from 96 schools--a 55% response rate, of which 38 (35%) were received from state-operated schools and 58 (87%) were received from BIA schools. Using a special form, the teachers in responding schools were asked for language information about entering primary students. (Students repeating the grade were excluded.) Information was collected on language used by students in the classroom and on the playground, and in the home by parents. Language used in the classroom was broken into categories: speaks no English (5.5%), speaks only single English words (13.7%), speaks English in no more than phrases (19.4%), speaks English in complete sentences (61.5%). Data on language spoken by students on the playground showed that 59.9% spoke English, 27.9% spoke a native language, and 11.9% were bilingual. Data on language spoken by parents showed that 41.0% spoke English, 28.4% spoke a native language, and 30.1% were bilingual. Marked differences were found between BIA and state-operated schools. Based on the survey, it is generalized that bilingual programs in Alaska are necessary. Eleven tables and a sample of the data-collection form are included. (AL)

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LANGUAGE SURVEY
OF
ENTERING PRIMARY STUDENTS

(Rural Schools)

May 1970

conducted for the

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF PLANNING & RESEARCH

by

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RC004643

LANGUAGE SURVEY

of

ENTERING PRIMARY STUDENTS

With the cooperation of the State-Operated Schools (SOS) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) a study of the language capabilities of entering primary students was accomplished this year. One hundred and seventy-five rural schools were contacted and replies were received from 96 schools, a 55% response rate. Of the 108 State-Operated Schools, replies were received from 38 schools (35%). One of these schools had no entering primary students so the tabulations are based on the 37 having entering primary students. Of the 67 Bureau of Indian Affairs schools 58 or 87% responded.

The teachers in these schools were asked for language information about entering primary students. Those repeating the grade were excluded from this study. Information was collected on language used in the classroom, language used on the playground, and language spoken at home by the parents.

The language used in the classroom was broken into categories as follows: speaks no English at all (5.5%); speaks only single English words (13.7%); speaks English in no more than phrases (19.4%); and those speaking English in complete sentences (61.5%). Unfortunately the survey instrument used did not ask how standard the English used was. Next year's survey instrument will attempt to collect data on this phase of the bilingual problem. No attempt has been made in this study to differentiate among the various native languages.

The language spoken by students on the playground (Table I - B) showed 59.9% spoke English, 27.9% spoke a native language and 11.9% were bilingual on the playground. It is interesting to note that the percentage of those speaking English on the playground and those speaking English in complete sentences in the classroom were so close, 59.9% and 61.4%.

The language spoken by the parents at home (Table I—C) showed 41.0% spoke English, 28.4% spoke a native language, and 30.1% were bilingual.

This survey will need to be repeated at least twice before enough data will have been collected to indicate how typical of the village the language behavior is of the entering primary students.

Tables 1 A, B, and C show a marked difference between BIA and SOS schools in the percentages. For example, those speaking English in complete sentences vary from 86.5% in SOS to 49.8% in BIA schools. Playground use of English shows 94.4% in SOS schools and 43.9% in BIA schools. The parental use of English in the home varies from 81.7% in SOS to 22.1% in BIA. A larger proportion of the BIA schools are found in the more isolated and remote areas of the State so it is probable that these percentages reflect the accultural differences. As the five-year plan calls for the State to assume control of all the BIA schools (17 for 1970) the question of remoteness is of less concern then the language usage.

In 38 schools (20 SOS and 18 BIA) all the entering students spoke English in sentences in the classroom. This contrasts with 57 schools (17 SOS and 40 BIA) where at least some of the children entered not being able to speak English in sentences. This dichotomy shows clearly in Tables II A, B, and C where these two groups are separately tabulated.

Of the SOS schools (Table II) where 100% speak English in the classroom, 100% also spoke English on the playground and 91.7%

of the parents spoke English at home. Conversely in the BIA schools where 100% spoke English in the classroom, 87.5% spoke English on the playground and only 46.9% of the parents used only English in the home. Even for this group where 100% spoke in English sentences in the classroom, the large difference in language spoken by parents indicates some differences in the educational program will be necessary.

The schools where some of the entering students did not speak English in sentences have a problem of greater magnitude than that listed above. While English in sentences spoken in the classroom averages 39.5% it varies from 70.5% in SOS schools to 30.4% in BIA schools. The same pattern exists in language used on the playground with 87.7% of SOS and 27.1% of BIA using English. The consistency also exists in the percentage of parents speaking only English at home with 69.7% of SOS and 12.6% of BIA schools.

Appendixes A, B, C, and D contain the basic data by village. As the numbers of students were so small in most locations it was not felt that percentages would be meaningful so they were not computed. The variation exhibited ran from one extreme (all spoke only Eskimo in class, on playground and at home) to the other where only English was spoken in class, on playground and at home (please bear in mind that this is a village with almost 100% native population).

The generalization that bilingual education is necessary in Alaska can be made due from the figures that show 38.6% entering speaking either no English or English in less than sentences. This would represent 324 children, a fairly sizable number. However, it is equally obvious that there are vast differences between villages. It would appear that the educational authorities should survey the language capabilities of each village. From this community involvement the school should then develop the type and kind of language program that would best fit the needs of the students of each individual village. In many villages the language needs will vary almost pupil by pupil and the program developed must obviously be tailored to adequately fulfill individual needs.

A survey such as this can serve to alert educators to the fact that a need does exist. It cannot take the place of a local in-depth language assessment nor will it support any development from the top down of programs to meet these needs. For this reason no attempt has been made in this paper to specify what primary language program would best fulfill the needs of pupils in varying bilingual villages.

It would be interesting in the in-depth local studies to explore not only language usage, but also whether there was a relationship between language usage and the retention of other cultural elements.

LANGUAGE PATTERNS OF ENTERING STUDENTS AND PARENTS OF ENTERING STUDENTS

RURAL ALASKA – 1969

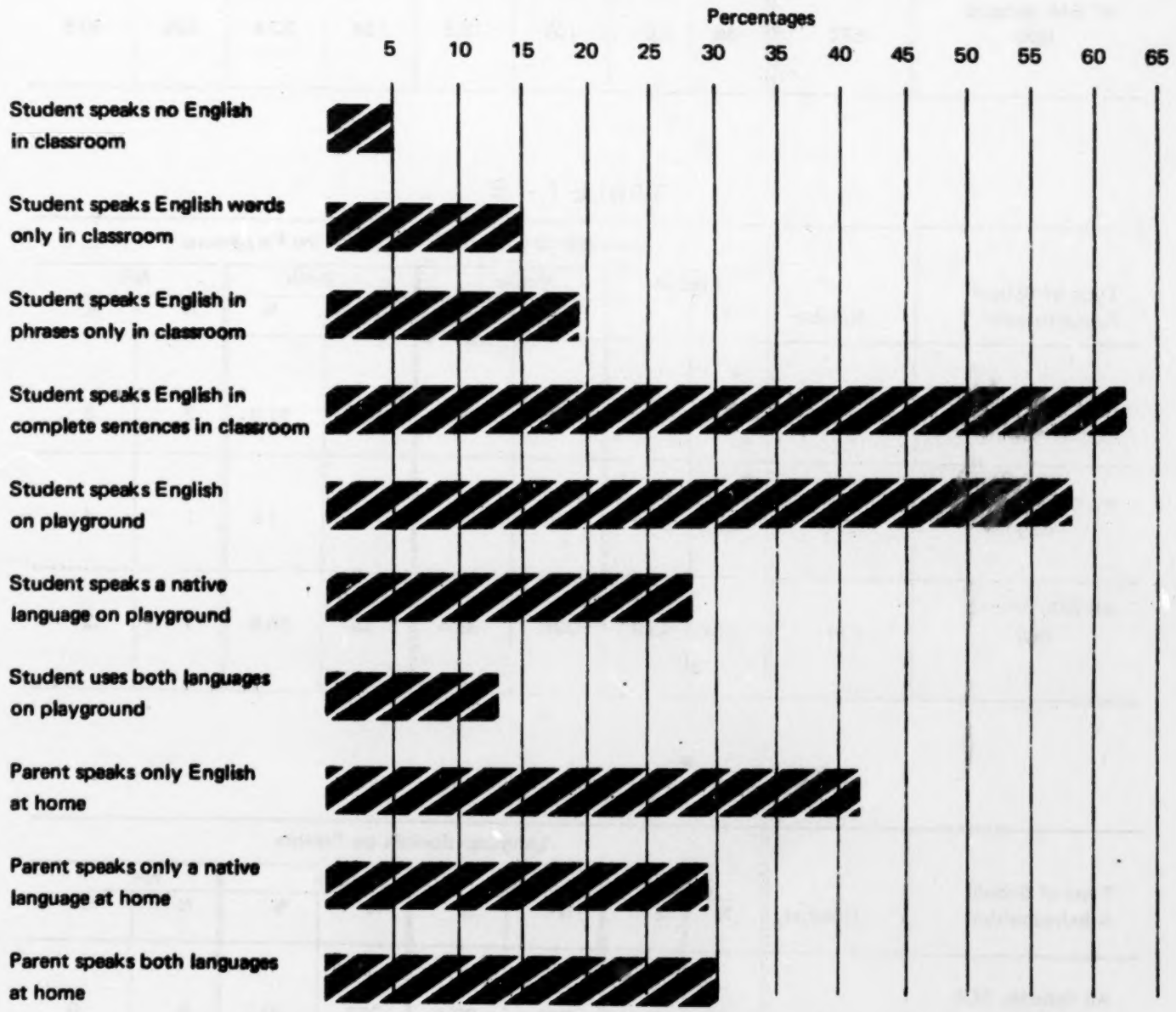

TABLE I – A

Type of School Administration	Number	Students Speak English in the Classroom							
		None		Word		Phrase		Sentence	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All Schools, SOS & BIA Combined	841	46	5.5	115	13.7	163	19.4	517	61.4
All SOS Schools (37)	267			7	2.6	29	10.9	231	86.5
All BIA Schools (58)	574	46	8.0	108	18.8	134	23.4	286	49.8

TABLE I – B

Type of School Administration	Number	Language Spoken by Students on the Playground							
		English		Native		Both		NR	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All Schools, SOS & BIA Combined	841	504	59.9	235	27.9	100	11.9	2	.3
All SOS Schools (37)	267	252	94.4	9	3.3	5	1.9	1	.4
All BIA Schools (58)	574	252	43.9	226	39.4	95	16.5	1	.2

TABLE I – C

Type of School Administration	Number	Language Spoken by Parents							
		English		Native		Both		NR	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All Schools, SOS & BIA Combined	841	345	41.0	239	28.4	253	30.1	4	.5
All SOS Schools (37)	267	218	81.7	11	4.1	34	12.7	4	1.5
All BIA Schools (58)	574	127	22.1	228	39.7	219	38.2		

TABLE II – A

Schools	Amount of English Spoken in the Classroom by Entering Students									
	None		Word		Phrase		Sentence		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
17 SOS schools reporting that some entering students do not speak English in sentences			7	5.7	29	23.8	86	70.5	122	100
40 BIA schools reporting that some do not speak English in sentences	46	11.1	108	26.1	134	32.4	126	30.4	414	100
57 Total SOS and BIA schools reporting that some do not speak English in sentences	46	11.1	115	21.5	163	30.4	212	39.5	536	46
20 SOS schools in which all entering students do speak English in sentences							145	100	145	100
18 BIA schools in which all entering students do speak English in sentences							160	100	160	100
38 TOTAL SOS & BIA schools in which all entering students do speak English in sentences							305	100	305	100

TABLE II – B

Schools	Language Used on the Playground by Entering Students									
	English		Native		Both		NR		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
17 SOS schools reporting that some entering students do not speak English in sentences	107	87.7	9	7.4	5	4.1	1	.8	122	100
40 BIA schools reporting that some entering students do not speak English in sentences	112	27.1	211	51.0	90	21.7	1	.2	414	100
57 Total SOS and BIA schools reporting that some entering students do not speak English in sentences	219	40.9	220	41.0	95	17.7	2	.4	536	100
20 SOS schools in which all entering students do not speak English in sentences	145	100							145	100
18 BIA schools in which all entering students do speak English in sentences	140	87.5	15	9.4	5	4.1	1	.8	160	100
38 Total SOS and BIA schools in which all entering students do speak English in sentences	285	93.5	15	4.9	5	1.6			305	100

TABLE II – C

Schools	Language Used by Parents of Entering Students									
	English		Native		Both		NR		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
17 SOS schools reporting that some entering students do not speak English in sentences	85	69.7	9	7.4	25	20.4	3	2.5	122	100
40 BIA schools reporting that some entering students do not speak English in sentences	52	12.6	212	51.2	150	36.2			414	100
57 Total SOS and BIA schools reporting that some entering students do not speak English in sentences	137	25.6	221	41.2	175	32.6	3	.6	536	100
20 SOS schools in which all entering students do speak English in sentences	133	91.7	2	1.4	9	6.2	1	.7	145	100
18 BIA schools in which all entering students do speak English in sentences	75	46.9	16	10.0	69	43.1			160	100
38 Total SOS and BIA schools in which all entering students do speak English in sentences	208	68.2	18	5.9	78	25.6	1	.3	305	100

APPENDIX A

Village		Students Speak English in the Classroom					Language Spoken By Students on the Playground				Language Spoken by Parents			
S O S	No.	None	Word	Phr.	Sent	N/R	Eng.	Nat.	Both	N/R	Eng.	Nat.	Both	N/R
Ambler	4			3	3		2		2				4	
Atka	2			2				2					2	
Belkofski	1			1			1						1	
Cape Pole	6			1	5		6				6			
Chignik Lake	5		1	3	1		5				4		1	
Circle City	3			1	2		3				2		1	
Delta Junction	25			1	24		24			1	24			1
Glennallen	19		1	2	16		19				16		3	
Holy Cross	7		1	1	5		7				6			1
Kobuk	2		1	1				1	1			2		
Northway	5		1	1	3		5				4		1	
Platinum	2			2			1		1				2	
Ruby	4			1	3		4				4			
Sand Point	20		1	1	18		20				19			1
St. George Island	6			4	2		6						6	
Teller	4			4			4						4	
Wainwright	7		1	2	4				6	1		7		
Sub Total	122		7	29	86		107	9	5	1	85	9	25	3

APPENDIX B

Village		Students Speak English in the Classroom					Language Spoken By Students on the Playground				Language Spoken by Parents			
BIA	No.	None	Word	Phr.	Sent	N/R	Eng.	Nat.	Both	N/R	Eng.	Nat.	Both	N/R
Barter Island	6				6		2		4				6	
Beaver	2				2		2				2			
Buckland	3				3						3			
Grayling	6				6		6				6			
Kiana	15				15		15						15	
Klukwan	4				4		4				1		3	
Koyuk	4				4		4				3		1	
Kotzebue	48				48		48				37		11	
Lower Kalskag	7				7		7					1	6	
Napakiak	15				15			15				15		
Point Hope	13				13		13						13	
Shageluk	4				4		4				4			
Sheldon Point	5				5		4		1				5	
Shishmaref	7				7		7				4		3	
Sleetmute	6				6		6				6			
Unalakleet	10				10		10				8		2	
Wales	4				4		4						4	
White Mountain	1				1		1				1			
Sub Total	160				160		140	15	5		75	16	69	

APPENDIX C

Village		Students Speak English in the Classroom					Language Spoken By Students on the Playground				Language Spoken by Parents			
S O S	No.	None	Word	Phr.	Sent	N/R	Eng.	Nat.	Both	N/R	Eng.	Nat.	Both	N/R
Angoon	13				13		13				13			
Annette	14				14		14				14			
Bradfield Canal	2				2		2				2			
Brown's Court	5				5		5				5			
Chistochina	2				2		2				2			
Cold Bay	2				2		2				2			
False Pass	2				2		2				2			
Ft. Yukon	13				13		13				6	2	5	
Gustavus	2				2		2				2			
Healy	12				12		12				10		1	1
Kenny Lake	5				5		5				5			
Koyukuk	5				5		5				5			
Metlakatla	37				37		37				37			
Nikolski	1				1		1						1	
Nondalton	10				10		10				10			
Perryville	2				2		2						2	
Stevens Village	1				1		1				1			
Sunrise Creek	2				2		2				2			
Thorne Bay	11				11		11				11			
Whale Pass	4				4		4				4			
Sub Total	145				145		145				133	2	9	1

APPENDIX D

Village		Classroom					Playground				Parents			
B I A	No.	None	Word	Phr.	Sent	N/R	Eng.	Nat.	Both	N/R	Eng.	Nat.	Both	N/R
Akiak	8		3	2	3			5	3			6	2	
Aklachuk	9	3	6					9				9		
Alaknuk	12	1	1	2	8		6	3	3		2	5	5	
Arctic Village	3			2	1			2	1			2	1	
Barrow	75	4	14	19	38		29	36	10		21	38	16	
Chefornak	3		2	1				3				3		
Chevak	19	10	9					19				19		
Deering	3			3			3				3			
Eek	11	2	6	1	2		2	9			2	9		
Emmonak	18		3	4	11		7	4	7		4	6	8	
Gambell	11	1	2	4	4		2	8	1		2	8	1	
Golovin	3			2	1		3						3	
Goodnews Bay	10	2	5	3			4	2	4		2	5	3	
Hooper Bay	15	3	9	2	1		1	14			1	9	5	
Kalskag	6			1	5				6				6	
Kasigluk	10		10					9	1			9	1	
Kipnuk	13	4	4	4	1			13				10	3	
Kivalina	5			5			5						5	
Kotlik	7			6	1		1		6				7	
Kwethluk	10		3	3	4			9	1			9	1	
Kwigillingok	4		1	3				3	1			3	1	
Mekoryuk	11			4	7		6		5		1	1	9	
Mountain Village	17			3	14		16		1		9		8	
Napaskiak	9		3	6				4	5			2	7	
Newtok	1		1					1				1		
Nightmute	3	3						3				3		
Noatak	12	1		7	5				12		1	2	9	
Nunapitchuk	13	1	2	6	4			13				12	1	
Pilot Station	11		1	10			11				1			
Quinhogak	8		3	4	1			8				3	5	
St. Michael	7		4		3		1		6			2	5	
Savoonga	11		5	4	2			11				11		
Scammon Bay	9			8	1		1	2	6		1	6	2	
Selavik	12	1	1	3	7		4		8		2	1	9	
Shaktoolik	4		1	2	1		3		1				4	
Stebbins	7	1	1	5			6			1			7	
Toksook Bay	10	10						10				10		
Tuluksag	3		2	1				3					3	
Tuntutuliak	8		5	2	1			8				8		
Venetie	3		1	2			1		2				3	
Sub Total	414	46	108	134	126		112	211	90	1	52	212	150	

FOR ENTERING PRIMARY STUDENTS

Information Requested by Commissioner Hartman

Please fill one out for each entering primary student who is not repeating :

Name of Child: _____

1. Does (s)he neither speak any English words nor apparently understand what you say to him (her)?
   a. Neither speaks or understands _____
   b. Is not totally devoid of some English _____
2. Does (s)he apparently have no English but seems to understand what you say to him (her)?
   a. Yes _____
   b. No _____
3. Does (s)he speak (any words at all) in English in class or to you?
   a. Yes _____
   b. No _____
4. If (s)he speaks some English and understands you, does (s)he speak in
   a. One word _____
   b. In phrases _____
   c. Complete if brief sentences _____
5. In what language does (s)he speak to other children on the playground? _____
6. What language is spoken in his (her) home? _____

COMMENT: _____

_____

_____

School _____

Signed _____